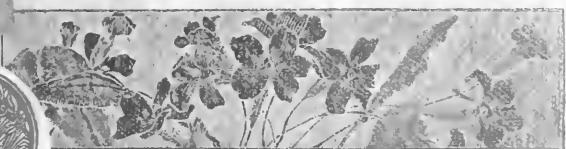


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IN PRIMROSE TIME

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IN PRIMROSE TIME



# IN PRIMROSE TIME

A New Irish Garland

BY

SARAH M. B. PIATT

AUTHOR OF 'A VOYAGE TO THE FORTUNATE ISLES,  
'AN IRISH GARLAND,' ETC.

33



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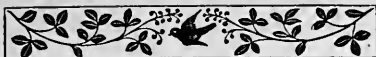
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IN PRIMROSE TIME.







## IN PRIMROSE TIME<sup>1</sup>

(EARLY SPRING IN IRELAND.)

### I.

HERE'S the lodge-woman in her great cloak coming,  
And her white cap. What joy  
Has touched the ash-man? On my word he's hum-  
ming  
A boy's song, like a boy!  
He quite forgets his cart. His donkey grazes  
Just where it likes the grass.  
The red-coat soldier, with his medal, raises  
His hat to all who pass;  
And that blue-jacket sailor,—hear him whistle,  
Forgetting Ireland's ills!

Oh, pleasant land—(who thinks of thorn or thistle ?)  
    Upon your happy hills  
The world is out ! And, faith, if I mistake not,  
    The world is in its prime  
(Beating for once, I think, with hearts that ache not)  
    In Primrose time.

## II.

Against the sea-wall leans the Irish beauty,  
    With face and hands in bloom,  
Thinking of anything but household duty  
    In her thatched cabin's gloom ;—  
Watching the ships as leisurely as may be,  
    Her blue eyes dream for hours.  
Hush ! There's her mother—coming with the baby  
    In the fair quest of flowers.  
And her grandmother !—hear her laugh and chatter,  
    Under her hair frost-white !  
Believe me, life can be a merry matter,  
    And common folk polite,  
And all the birds of heaven are of a feather,  
    And all their voices rhyme,—  
They sing their many songs, like one, together,  
    In Primrose time.

## III.

The magpies fly in pairs (an evil omen  
It were to see but one);  
The snakes—but here, though, since St. Patrick, no  
man  
Has seen them in the sun;  
The white lamb thinks the black lamb is his brother,  
And half as good as he;  
The rival car-men all love one another,  
And jest, right cheerily;  
The compliments among the milk-men savour  
Of pale gold blossoming;  
And everybody wears the lovely favour  
Of our sweet Lady Spring.  
And though the ribbons in a bright procession  
Go towards the Chapel's chime,—  
Good priest, there be but few sins for confession,  
In Primrose time.

## IV.

Now all the children in this isle of faery  
Whisper and laugh and peep.  
(Hush, pretty babblers! Little feet, be wary,  
You'll scare them in their sleep,—

The wee, weird people of the dew, who wither  
    Out of the sun, and lie  
Curled in the wet leaves, till the moon comes hither.)—  
    The new-made butterfly  
Forgets he was a worm. The ghostly castle,  
    On its lone rock and grey,  
Cares not a whit for either lord or vassal  
    Gone on their dusty way,  
But listens to the bee, on errands sunny.—  
    A thousand years of crime  
May all be melted in a drop of honey  
    In Primrose time !



THE AWAKENING OF THE BIRDS



## THE AWAKENING OF THE BIRDS.

AT MONKSTOWN CASTLE, COUNTY CORK.

I KNOW a ruin, on a hill—  
Like other ruins, it may be.  
It must be tired of standing still  
And always looking at the sea.

So old that I am young by it,  
It tells me tales of monk and knight—  
Tales that no chronicler hath writ ;  
Just as my great-grandmother might.

It likes to talk of silken train,  
Of jewelled sword and plumèd head,  
And quite forgets how low the rain  
Has beaten down its courtly dead.

It told me, with a gracious air,  
About Elizabeth's best gown,  
But when I spoke of her red hair  
And painted nose, I saw it frown !

It *has* invited me to sit  
Till after dark. But, then, it's clear,  
Somehow——Oh, I don't care a whit  
For Things you cannot see or hear !

But, children, though this ruin might  
Not be the place to sleep, you see,  
At morning it's the prettiest sight  
In all this pretty world to me.

For when, like one that's slept too long,  
The sudden sun before me springs,  
Ivy and stone break into song,  
And hall and battlement take wings !

The lords of earth lie still down there ;—  
They have their night, who had their day.  
See, in their place, the lords of air  
Make merry with their honours grey.

From mullioned windows they peep out,  
In families, or in lover-pairs ;  
On the high walls they walk about  
And chatter of their sweet affairs.

Sir Something, gone from graveyard fame,  
God rest you under flower and dew !  
The wind has blown away your name,  
But, in my heart, I reverence you.

Oh, you were good to build (too good  
For me to set your praise in words)  
So brave a castle by the wood  
To be the happy home of birds !



A PORTRAIT AT YOUGHAL





## A PORTRAIT AT YOUGHAL.<sup>2</sup>

THERE at the inn, he looked at me.  
A flash of fire died on the wall.  
Without, the broken-hearted sea  
Beat in the moon at Youghal.

Still as a god's were those deep eyes,  
And empty as a god's of tears,  
That showed nor pity nor surprise  
After three hundred years.

I felt that one pale flower's sharp scent  
There at the window like a knife,  
What time the dead man seemed content  
To watch the passion of life.

Another flash of fire. — And so  
They've given us a haunted room :  
The knight there in the dusk bowed low—  
Or the wind waved his plume !

. . . But what is this ?—The maid with tea.  
(It may be she has heard the name  
This dark immortal wore while he  
Walked in the world's brief fame.)

“Who is it—that old portrait—there ?”  
She held the lamp close to the wall,  
And told us, with a little stare,  
“He was—the Mayor of Youghal.”

AN IRISH FAIRY STORY



## AN IRISH FAIRY STORY.

“GOOD mother, from your wayside hut,  
Wise with your ninety years,  
Tell me a fairy story—but  
First wring out all the tears ;  
For I am hurt beyond the skill  
Of leech, hurt with a knife  
That seems, in sooth, but slow to kill—  
Good mother, hurt with life !”

“ My lady, sure you are but sad,—  
Yet it’s a merry day.  
I’m not too wrinkled to be glad  
(And you are not yet grey).  
It’s long, long yet I hope to live,  
For God is good, I’m told,  
And life’s the best He has to give ;  
I’m thankful to be old.

“Yes, God is good, I’m told. You see,  
I cannot read. But, then,  
I can believe. He’s good to me,  
He is, and good to men.  
They say He sends us sorrow, too.  
The world would be too sweet  
To leave, if this should not be true.”  
—(“The world the moth can eat.”)

“He keeps my little cabin there  
Safe when the sea-wind blows.  
When I was young He let me wear  
Upon my cheeks a rose ;  
And then it was He sent a youth,—  
The handsomest, you’d own,  
On all the Irish coast. . . . In truth  
It’s much I’ve lived alone,

“My lady, since that long black night  
His fishing boat went down.—  
My boy that kept my heart so light  
Had work there in the town ;  
A lovely boy !—such gold-like hair,  
All curls !” (Her eyes grew dim.)  
“Christ keep him ! He is quiet there  
With daisies over him.”

She hushed and turned to go inside.

—An earthen floor, ah me !

A heap of straw (the door was wide)

Was all that I could see.

Yet on the little window, low,

A bright geranium grew ;

“That’s for my boy, he loved them so,—

He loved these thrushes, too.”

“ Good mother——” “ Sure but things go ill

In our poor country. Yet

He gives me bread and shelter still,—

It’s me He’ll not forget.”

We parted, for the light was low ;

I turned and looked around :—

Lord of us all, can heart’s-ease grow

In such a plot of ground ?





AN EMIGRANT SINGING FROM  
A SHIP



AN EMIGRANT SINGING FROM A SHIP.

SING on ; but there be heavy seas between  
The shores you leave and those  
Toward which you sail. Look back, and see how  
green,  
How green the shamrock grows ;  
How fond your rocks and ruins toward you lean ;  
How bright the thistle blows,  
How red the Irish rose !

—— He waves his cap, and, with a sorry jest,  
Flies singing like a bird  
That is right glad to leave its island nest.  
I wonder if he heard,  
What time he kissed his hand back to the rest,  
The cry, till then deferred,  
The mother's low, last word.

Boy-exile, youth is light of heart, I ween ;  
And fairy-tales come true,  
Sometimes, perhaps, in lands we have not seen.  
Sing on ; the sky is blue.  
Sing on (I wonder what your wild words mean) ;—  
May blossoms strange and new  
Drift out to welcome you !

Sing on. The world is wide, the world is fair,  
Life may be sweet and long.  
Sing toward the Happy West—yet have a care  
Lest Ariel join your song !  
(You loved the chapel-bell, you know a prayer ?)  
If winds should will you wrong,  
God's house is builded strong !

Sing on, and see how golden grain can grow,  
How golden tree and vine,  
In our great woods ; how apple-buds can blow,  
And robins chirp and shine.  
And—in my country may you never know,  
Ah me ! for yours to pine,  
As I, in yours, for mine.

A PARTY IN A DREAM

E



## A PARTY IN A DREAM.

STRANGE, after five-and-twenty years, to keep  
A tryst, made, somehow, in the shadow of sleep!

In the sad island-moon, here by the sea,  
What still ship landed such a company?

Now, that I think, some of the girls wore white  
With flowers.—Ah me, my heart! as well they might!

The boys—but, surely, long ago I read  
That one in battle drooped his shining head.

And one, they said, had vanished through the sand,  
A home-sick alien, in a palmy land.

One laughing, whispered: “After such a night  
We shall not look well in the morning light;

“The boys would say—but it is time to go;”  
And suddenly the cock began to crow.

“So, I, the only living one,” I said,  
“At dead of night have entertained the dead.”



TWO INNOCENTS ABROAD



## TWO INNOCENTS ABROAD.

ON CORONATION DAY, JUNE 1884.

THEN all at once the loyal cannon spoke  
Across the hazy, old-world terraced town,  
In bloom with British flags,—where dust and smoke  
Have settled down.

Toward Camden and Spike Island looking out,  
Two children in the foreign sun lay curled :  
“ Oh listen, will you ? What’s the noise about ?  
It shakes the world.”

“ The world don’t mind it very much, I’d say,—  
It doesn’t sound much louder than a bee !  
Why, I can hardly hear it. Any way,  
It don’t shake me !”

“ I’ll tell you now, just what it all must mean,”  
Said little six-years-old ; “ I think it’s—War.”  
“ No, it’s—the English, for their gracious Queen  
And Governor !

“This is the very day she first put on  
The crown. And, if the Irish like or not,  
Somebody’s got to wear it till it’s gone,  
And that is what!”

“Well, what day did the President, you know,  
Put on his crown?” “To hear you talk like that!  
The President’s a gentleman—and so  
He wears a hat.

“You know the crown. We saw it in the Tower.”  
“But was it gold, or only shining brass——”  
“(We had to look at it for half-an-hour!)——”  
“And painted glass?”

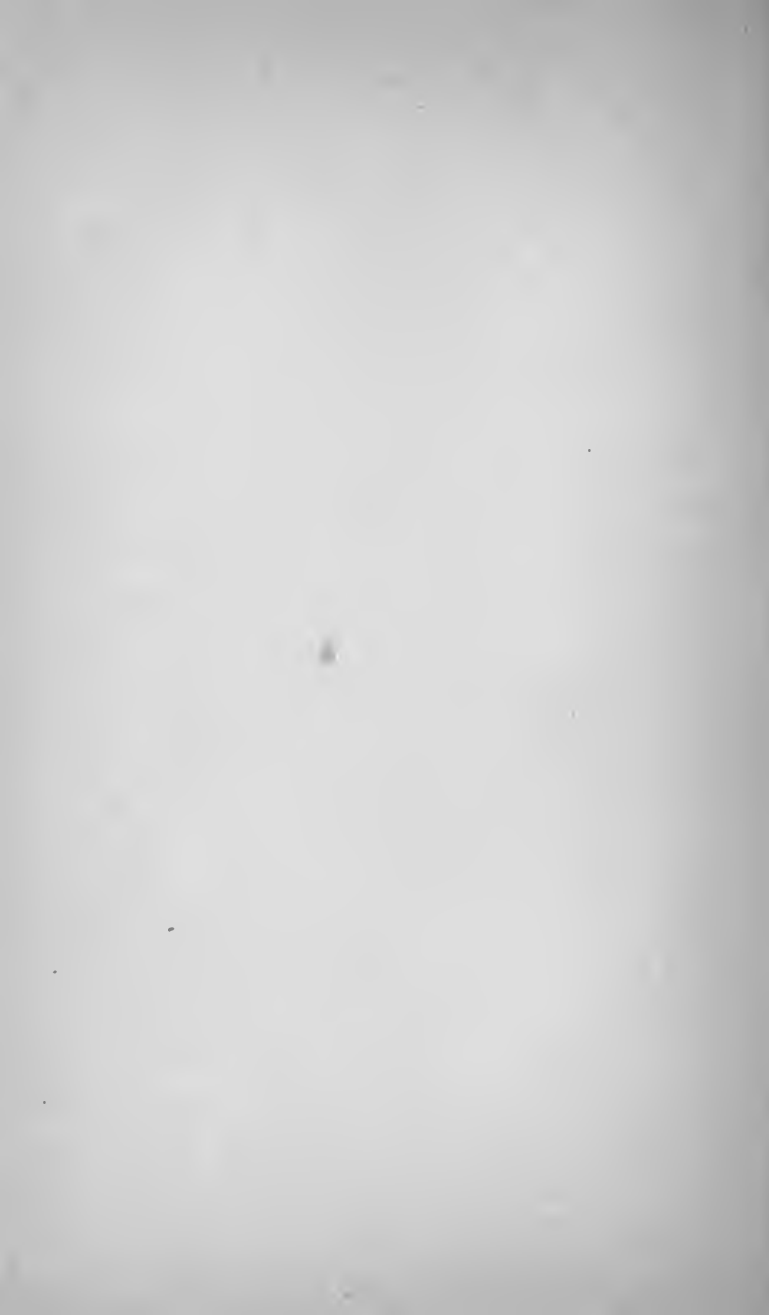
“The glass was only diamonds. But the gold  
Is sure enough. And it won’t do to touch.”  
“It’s shut up in a cage.” “It is so old  
It can’t stand much!”

“I wish the President wore one.” “He dare  
Not.” “But, it’s prettier than a hat.”  
“You don’t think any man alive would wear  
A thing like that!”

“The Queen’s a lady. Don’t you know that yet?”

“I’d think that even the English wouldn’t care  
To have a lady for the Queen! I’d get  
A man—somewhere!”

“The men are all in Egypt! (I suppose  
The English think they know what they’re about.)  
And General Gordon’s—where nobody knows,  
And can’t get out!”



BIRD'S-NESTING IN IRELAND





## BIRD'S-NESTING IN IRELAND.

THIS is the time, and all the birds are flying  
Upon the old, old quest ;—  
If there is one thing left on earth worth trying,  
It is to make a nest.

This is the time (ah, there is promise in it !)  
Had I my choice of things  
Worth holding high, I'd answer in a minute :  
“ Good Mother, give me wings.”

(On last year's broken bough the frost may glisten :  
They do not care a whit.  
They turn their heads, and chirp, as loth to listen,  
“ Pray do not mention it !”)

This is the time by birds beloved and dreaded,  
When all their curious joys  
Are at the mercy of this curly-headed  
Mad brood of climbing boys.

From the black thatch of wayside huts rain-beaten,  
Under the bright roof-flowers,  
They break at morning into this moth-eaten,  
Wind-shaken world of ours.

They leave the lodge, they leave the mansion hidden  
By dark-leaved feudal walls ;—  
The little landlord, toward the tree forbidden,  
Through his great gateway crawls.

The high-born crow in perilous far places,  
Proud, with ancestral caws,  
Sees in his family-tree the mocking faces  
And hands that hold no laws.

The lark, which knows that music fit for heaven  
Is nursed upon the ground,  
Is in a flutter lest some hint be given  
And her low covert found.

The thrush, deep in the laurel's fair green glitter,  
Hides well her house—in vain.  
The Bible sparrow, with her world-old twitter,  
Learns that she can complain.

The linnet thinks, out of the honey-scented  
Gold-flowering of the furze,  
No being of the air has yet lamented  
Misfortune like to hers.

The robin in her wall of stone, grown over  
With immemorial vines,  
Hears the foe's footstep coming through the clover,  
And her bright bosom pines.

The wren, beside the waters where the falling  
Blooms of the briar-rose float,  
Breast-deep in folds of island moss, is calling  
With an upbraiding note.

The owl in her black battlement is shaken ;  
Out of the mould she flies.  
The gull's sea-castle in the rocks is taken—  
The foam is cut with cries.

The cuckoo, that elusive cheat and lonely,  
(That must be heard, not seen !)  
In trouble for some other bird's nest only,  
Fares likes the rest, I ween.

And when the rosy veteran's tearful mother  
Hears his dark story through,  
He says : "The birds had better build another ;  
They've nothing else to do."

THE LEGEND OF MONKSTOWN



## THE LEGEND OF MONKSTOWN.

COUNTY CORK.

I SAY it is not haunted, though ;—  
I saw it all with fearless eyes,  
Not quite three hundred years ago,  
While waiting for the moon to rise.  
Hedge-roses to the winds talked low,

When suddenly here, a man in mail  
Sprang from his panting horse, and leant  
Against his sword. With wonder pale,  
He stared at roof and battlement,—  
And breathed as if his breath would fail.

He was, of course, a handsome knight  
(Sir Anything-you-please was he) !  
His brow was slightly scarred with fight  
And stained with Spanish suns ; for he  
Had passed through—veils and fans, this wight.

In truth he 'd sailed with Francis Drake  
To singe King Philip's beard——But, no ;  
He was not born then ! I mistake.  
He fought for Philip,—that is so,—  
And now came home, his ease to take.

How came this castle in his way ?  
Was that Aladdin's lamp which she  
Held at the window, whose weird ray  
Had raised this wonder ? Could it be  
Arabian Night that round him lay ?

There was a cry, a kiss, a smile.  
With fancies dim his brain was filled.  
. . . Was this his own heroic isle,  
Or evil ground ?—would fairies build  
In that Elizabethan style ?

“Marry !” (for that's the thing they said  
In Shakspeare's time and his) he cried,  
“It doth appear that I am dead !  
This pleaseth me but ill—beside  
Here in the grass the rose is red.



“There’s nothing pale here,—even the moon  
Hath a fine colour, and the tree  
Is green, as with the leaf of June.  
A right good world it seemeth me !  
But I have fasted since the noon.

“Beshrew me ! but thou ’lt crush my plume,  
Fair ghost, with thy white winding arm !”  
— The lady with the island bloom,  
Nursed by the sea-foam, in her charm,  
Sobbed out : “ I did it—where’s the harm ?

“ I built that castle there for thee  
(To give my lord a brave surprise)  
With eggs and butter ! But, ah me !  
They—did—not—quite—pay—all !” Her  
eyes  
Dropped ready for the tears, you see.

“ Only a groat besides—Confess  
I built the castle for a groat !”  
Dark frowned the knight at her distress,  
Then shouted from his trumpet throat :  
“ It might have cost thee somewhat less !”



IN ST. MARY'S CHURCH



## IN ST. MARY'S CHURCH.

AT YOUGHAL, COUNTY CORK.

WE left the sun and all the green  
Late leaves, and birds that sing between  
The sky and this sad island's last  
Loth flowers, and walked into the Past,  
With beating hearts almost afraid  
To stir the dust the ages made.

Down the still aisles the tapers gleamed.  
The dead lay on their tombs and dreamed,  
Through their long sleep of stone, forlorn,  
Of that sweet world where they were born,  
Where love and war and lands and gold  
Made life a pleasant thing to hold.

At first, it did not seem quite clear  
If Christ, the Lord, were worshipped here,  
Or if the lion, or the bull!  
(The solemn place had grown so full  
Of images of these, to show  
The pride dark in the vaults below.)

There were the statues of rude days,  
Recalling, in pathetic ways,  
The art of people dear to me,  
At rest beyond the restless sea,  
My neighbours, who some years ago,  
Buildd the mounds in Mexico.

In this last stronghold of the knights,  
By the great window's lonesome lights,  
From which the eternal Irish rains  
Could never steal away the stains,  
I read on everything, ah me !  
The Hebrew king's worn homily.

"Here lies Sir Edward Villiers." There  
His death-still banner fades in air.  
Just opposite, in dreary state,  
The Earl of Cork, surnamed the Great,  
With cheek in palm and fierce fixed eyes,  
Much trimmed with yellowing ermine, lies.

Below the Earl, right stately, stand  
Two Countesses who shared his hand  
(In family love and face to face !)  
Above, his mother, in her place,  
In rose-pink train, plumed hat and ruff,  
Holding a skull, looks odd enough.

Here sleeps a Spanish Don, who came  
In the Armada. (What's his name?)  
There, with a dove on his grim breast,  
Some Lord of Desmond takes his rest  
Under the usual epitaph,  
Which Time effaced,—lest one should laugh?

Here with an ancient upturned face,  
My lady of the same high race,  
Who, in her second century  
Half-way, fell from a cherry tree,  
And ended so her days, sleeps on—  
Not caring that her nose is gone.

And here, with silence folded deep,  
Above his dark and heavy sleep,  
Lies one, who with his red right hand  
Rained blood-drops on the Holy Land,  
Believing, in his heart, that he  
Did God's sweet will—so, let him be.

From Norman arch, and oaken chest  
Wherein seven hundred years were prest,  
Like wrinkled leaves, we turned away,—  
But, when the Sexton was to pay,  
A startled modern voice cried: "Oh,  
Was all that worth a shilling though?"

Young savage of the woody West,  
And did you leave the eagle's nest,  
The war-dance and the council fire  
And scalping-knife—may I inquire—  
To value feudal Europe at  
Less than a shilling! Think of that!



THE IVY OF IRELAND



## THE IVY OF IRELAND.

O LAND of Yesterday—and of To-morrow ?  
Whose blossoms breathe the air  
Of Paradise ! O Land of mirth and sorrow,  
How sweet this wreath you wear !

Ivy of Ireland, clasp the exile's Mother  
(Lo, her deep eyes are wet !)—  
The tears of ages surely shall not smother  
Her faith in something yet.

In their last look her young men see you, clinging  
To some last, lonely height,  
Waving farewells, while ghostly lips are singing  
Their old world out of sight.

Then, oh ! the withered women with their wailing  
There at the parting pier !  
And, oh ! that phantom ship for ever sailing  
With souls belovèd here !

How tenderly your roots ring round the fingers  
    (And is there hope in dust ?)  
Of Irish chieftains and of Irish singers,  
    Though sword and harp may rust !

Mourner at grave and ruin !   Whispering warder  
    Of every place forlorn ;  
Night-listener at a vanished world's dumb border  
    And first to shine with morn !

Ivy of Ireland ! had I words to fashion  
    Clear as your drops of dew—  
Were I a poet, with a poet's passion,  
    I'd sing a song for you !

ONE HAPPY WOMAN



## ONE HAPPY WOMAN.

THE world is wide enough to hold  
One happy woman, she was told.  
The little maid looked up to guess :  
“ A bride, in just the loveliest dress ;  
A ship is waiting, too, in sight,  
To sail for —— ” “ No, you are not right.

“ The woman you are guessing lies  
To-night in some weird hut. Her eyes  
Are void ; her hollow hands are cold,  
(They have not even a rose to hold).  
A light is dying at her head ;  
And she is happy—being dead.”





## NOTES.

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(<sup>1</sup>) Page 9.—This piece was published in *ST. NICHOLAS*, the New York Magazine for young folks, for May 1885, the following note by the Editor at the time referring to it:—  
“Mrs. Piatt’s charming poem, ‘In Primrose Time,’ which appears on page 497 of this number, with its sympathetic glimpses of early spring in Ireland, will be appreciated by all the older readers of *ST. NICHOLAS*. It will show, moreover, that to all classes in that green island across the sea, as also, we hope, to *ST. NICHOLAS* readers everywhere, the sweet yellow flower of the British Isles, that is so welcome a spring visitor, means much more than it did to that all too practical Mr. Peter Bell in Wordsworth’s well-known poem :

‘ A primrose by the river’s brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more.’

Mr. J. J. Piatt sends a letter to the Editor, accompanying Mrs. Piatt’s poem, written from Queenstown, the Irish port which all the Atlantic steamers first ‘speak’ on their eastward-bound trips, and the town to which the verses refer : In this he says : ‘ The leaves of the primrose are soft, somewhat flannel-like in texture, and of a pale-green colour (they resemble mullen leaves in texture and colour) ; the flower is of a delicate light yellow. The primrose has always, I

suppose, been a favourite early spring flower here. One day last spring it was used all over Great Britain to commemorate the anniversary of Lord Beaconsfield's death. I saw many ladies and gentlemen wearing it on the streets in Cork upon that day, and it was reported that so great was the demand for the flower in London that many orders for supplies were sent to France and Belgium.' Mrs. Piatt's verses, of course, have no reference to any political sentiment associated with the primrose, but only to the 'era of good feeling' it seems to bring in, and the delightful new heaven and earth of spring."

(<sup>2</sup>) Page 21.—After previously visiting the house of Sir Walter Raleigh. Youghal is pronounced very much like *yawl*.

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By the same Author.

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## *Extracts from British Critical Opinions.*

The Academy, December 5, 1885.

'The author of these poems and her work are well known on the other side of the Atlantic, and two tiny volumes of verse have recently introduced her very favourably to English readers. The present book contains a rich and excellently selected gathering from Mrs. Piatt's various works, issued in America, and it will, undoubtedly, win a warm welcome from the lovers of poetry among us, and extend the radius of her influence and reputation. Mrs. Piatt's verses are characterised by a distinct and pleasing originality. . . . Nothing more unfailingly distinguishes her poems than the solid kernel of fresh, original thought and feeling in each of them—thought and feeling which are expressed with careful and conscientious artistry. . . . Not a few of the most delicate and successful pieces of the book are to be found in the section titled, "In Company with Children." Here the womanly nature of the poet has full scope. . . . The temptation to quote further from this charming volume is almost irresistible, but we must leave the reader to discover the rest of its dainty and pathetic things for himself. The book entitles its author to a very honourable place in the roll of women poets of our century.'

The St. James's Gazette, November 21, 1885.

'We find that Mrs. Piatt's Muse is the Muse of the American Girl. . . . And we confess, for our own part, that the more completely she is the Muse of the American Girl the better we like her. There is real originality in such pieces as "If I were a Queen," "Caprice at Home," and "After the Quarrel." The reflection on Cleopatra—

"No coward of my conqueror's race  
Should offer me his blood, I know,  
If I were a Queen—"

is delightfully in the spirit of free Transatlantic criticism. Rhythmically, too, Mrs. Piatt is at her best in these lighter pieces. In "Caprice at Home" there is a pettishness of movement in the verse corresponding excellently to its mood. Take for example, the lines:—

"No, I will not say good-bye,  
Not good-bye, nor anything ;"

or

"Everything I want I miss.  
Oh, a precious world is this "

Very arch, too, is "After the Quarrel," where one girl is consoling another for the loss of her lover :—

"But he will not come?—Why, then,  
Is no other within call?  
There are men and men, and men—  
And these men are brothers all!  
Each sweet fault of his you 'll find  
Just as sweet in all his kind."

There is so much room in our literature for verse which is playful without being exactly humorous, that it is to be hoped Mrs. Piatt will pursue further a vein in which she is so eminently successful. We have no wish, however, to disparage the more serious efforts of this pleasing and unpretentious writer. Like Miss Ingelow and other disciples of the great but unequal poetess of "Casa Guidi Windows," Mrs. Piatt's mood alternates between a fantastic regret and a heart-broken idealism. She bewails mystically the dead infancies of her growing children, and has dreams about them in a glorified perfection. All this is well summed up in the narrative poem from which the volume takes its title—the poem which tries to force on us the conclusion that

"We leave the Fortunate Isles behind,  
The Fortunate Isles to find ;"

and abounds in vaguely suggestive imagery, as of the butterflies

"That glitter, homesick for the form  
And lost sleep of the worm."

In "Two Veils" and "Her Cross and Mine," Mrs. Piatt has touched skilfully on the contrast between the world's perils and the safe shelter of the convent. "The Altar at Athens" is a rather striking presentation of the enigma of contending creeds. "The Gift of Empty Hands" and "Everything" are fables of deft invention if trite morality. The first stanza of "To-day" is worth quotation for its easy rendering of a plaintive mood :—

"Ah, real thing of bloom and breath,  
I cannot love you while you stay.  
Put on the dim, still charm of death,  
Fade to a phantom, float away,  
And let me call you Yesterday !"

"Asking for Tears" has something of the accent of "Sonnets from the Portuguese." In the more dramatic pieces, like "The Palace-Burner," "There was a Rose," and "A Wall Between," these abrupt artifices are less inappropriate. "A Wall Between," which presents in some nine pages the scene of a husband coming in priest's disguise to the death-bed of his neglected wife, seems to be admirably adapted for recitation. The writer preserves here, as always, both delicacy and taste. The piece is a good one. But we recur to our preference of Mrs. Piatt as the lyrist of whim, the Muse of the American Girl.

The Literary World, January 1, 1886.

'One of the finest poems in the book is "The Brother's Hand," founded upon a story of the American Civil War. There is a good deal of power, passion, and pathos in it. It is the longest poem in the book, and is marked by much true feeling and great narrative skill.'

London Figaro, February 20, 1886.

'It was high time, though, that acquaintance was made with so charming a writer, who, while reminding us of our Jean Ingelow and Adelaide Proctor, has indubitable originality—and originality, too, of a very rare kind—of her own. . . . In so short a notice it is, indeed, difficult to even name the beauties of her characteristic muse. Allusion must be made, however, to her wonderful, and, as it would seem, intuitive power of analysing child-nature. Many of her poems deal with children, and her happiest and most winsome touches are to be found in them. Mrs. Piatt possesses genuine imagination, and, moreover, that dramatic instinct which helps so greatly to make a poem intense and vivid. . . . But to multiply quotations is impossible, and we must be content with giving the two stanzas with which Mrs. Piatt concludes this delightful volume. She says:—

"Sweet World, if you will hear me now :  
I may not own a sounding Lyre  
And wear my name upon my brow  
Like some great jewel quick with fire.

But let me, singing, sit apart,  
In tender quiet with a few,  
And keep my fame upon my heart,  
A little blush-rose wet with dew."

There is the melody of real poetry here.'

The Saturday Review, March 13, 1886.

'Of all the concourse of singers, ungallantly described in their own land as "female poets," Mrs. Piatt is the most racy and, in a word, the most American. Mr. Stedman finds her charming "at her best," and Miss Preston most judiciously commends her delightful poems of children. Mr. Howells praises her that, "she has not written like a man," and the Boston *Repository* takes Mr. Howells to task for praising "the feminine quality" of Mrs. Piatt's muse. For our part, we are at issue with the *Repository* lady (as we must assume the critic to be), and are touched with the felicity of Mr. Howells' remarks. The new selection of Mrs. Piatt's poems should be most welcome to all who seek in American poetry something more than a pale reflex of the British commodity. In the goodly company of poetesses, all dight in their singing robes, Mrs. Piatt's part is that of the *ingénue*. Her poems, with all their whim and inconstancy of mood, are charmingly sincere, artless, piquant, and full of quaint surprise. Her pathos is not less individual, though we like her best in her "Dramatic Persons and Moods," in such poems as "Sometime," "If I were a Queen," "After the Quarrel," "Enchanted," and the like. The reflections of the speaker in the second poem in rejecting the example of all historic queens are exquisitely girl-like and natural, even to the rejection of Cleopatra:—

"Then she of Egypt—with the asp  
To drain my deadly beauty dry?—  
To see my Roman lover clasp  
His sword with surer love, and die

Closer to it than me? Not so.  
 No desert-snake with nursing grace  
 Should draw my fierce heart's fiercest glow;  
 No coward of my conqueror's race  
 Should offer me his blood, I know—  
 If I were a Queen."

'Very startling is the quaint epigram in the first stanza of "Marble or Dust?":—

"A child, beside a statue, said to me,  
 With pretty wisdom very sadly just,  
 'That man is Mr. Lincoln, Mama. He  
 Was made of marble; we are made of dust.'"

**The Nation (Dublin), December 5, 1885.**

'The titular poem in Mrs. Piatt's collection, "A Voyage to the Fortunate Isles," is an allegory whose lesson is, that in seeking for distant happiness we miss that which is within our grasp. The thought is an old one that has furnished food for meditation to the poet and philosopher since the earliest ages. Paradise itself was not free from these illusory ambitions. Love of change and desire of power and knowledge were what urged our first parents to their great transgression. It is no slight praise of Mrs. Piatt's poem, to say that, on a theme coeval with the world, and that in every generation has found its exponents among the greatest poets, our author has found a new and attractive figure by which to convey the old but ever necessary warning against restlessness and discontent. . . . In her description of children and their ways Mrs. Piatt could not be surpassed for accuracy and pathos. With intensified womanly fondness her whole heart goes out to them, as she watches their movements with the deep interest of her loving, sympathetic nature. . . . We would wish, did the limits of our space permit, to consider more at length these extraordinary and, with all their sadness, really beautiful poems, as they are well worthy of minute and careful study."

**The Graphic, January 16, 1886.**

'It is amply borne out by the present collected edition of her poems, the music and finish of which it is almost superfluous to praise. But, whilst acknowledging the author's great gifts, we cannot join in the chorus of unlimited praise which seems to be the rule in America. She has been compared to Mrs. Browning, and undoubtedly, the influence of the great English poet-woman is most apparent—one most powerful piece, "A Wall Between," is almost worthy of the author of "Bertha in the Lane." . . . The book is a striking one . . . and must not be neglected by any one who would form a just estimate of modern poetic art.'

**The Scotsman, January 1, 1886.**

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**The Freeman's Journal, February 19, 1886.**

'Her poetry is singularly pretty, tuneful and tender, and many of her pieces, especially the descriptive and narrative ones, rise to the highest level.'

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*The Pilot* (Boston, U.S.A.), April 18, 1885.

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